

Adjudication Standards for Resolving LBI and Periodic Reinvestigation

- A. INTRODUCTION: The review of background investigations and the resolution of derogatory information is an essential part of the process for determining whether an individual is eligible for government contract employment with the Bureau of Prisons (BOP). These functions should be conducted, whenever possible, by designated personnel outside of the employee's supervisory chain. The supervisor's knowledge of derogatory information may affect the supervisor's objectivity regarding performance appraisal, promotions, etc., of the employee. Any reference to "government employment" within this document includes persons working under contract at the District of Columbia Requirement.
- B. PURPOSE: The purpose of this document is to assist those individuals who initially review background investigations for employment and for those individuals who conduct Subject Interviews for the purpose of resolving and documenting derogatory information. Derogatory information appears in a background investigation in a number of ways. Some information is derogatory information on its face and is both easily recognized and identified. There is other information that, standing alone is somewhat innocuous. When this information is reviewed in the context of other information, it may also require resolution.
- C. PRINCIPALS: All derogatory information must be favorably resolved by the contractor before the BOP will consider granting final approval for employees to work with Federal offenders under this contract. The resolution will require the adjudicator to identify the information, explain why it is considered insignificant, or provide documented resolution. It is not sufficient to resolve derogatory information by merely indicating that the employee exhibits acceptable job performance.

Adjudication of background investigations or reinvestigations that reveal activity or conduct that may render an employee susceptible to coercion. will be subject to the following guidelines:

- (1) If the background investigation or reinvestigation demonstrates the employee is open regarding his or her conduct, no personal interview or other action is warranted.

- (2) If the background investigation or reinvestigation indicates, or raises an unresolved question as to whether the employee is concealing any conduct that reasonably would subject the employee to coercion, the contractor will arrange for an interview with the employee to discuss:
 - (a) the issue of concealed conduct that was raised during the background investigation or reinvestigation, and whether or not the employee is in fact concealing any conduct that reasonably would subject the employee to coercion. If the discussion demonstrates that the person is not concealing any such conduct, no further action is warranted.
 - (b) If the employee may be concealing conduct that reasonably would subject the employee to coercion, the interviewer will continue to discuss:
 - 1) the contractors' concern regarding the potential for coercion, pressure, manipulation, or blackmail;
 - 2) the contractor's Employee Standards of Conduct requirement that the employee immediately submit a written report of any attempt at coercion or blackmail to the CEO.

The interviewer should prepare a memorandum documenting the discussion and the employee's acknowledgment of the reporting requirements for the employee's personnel file. The employee is not required to sign any documentation.

Resolution of derogatory information should afford the employee an opportunity to comment on the derogatory information or a chance to offer his/her "side of the story. " Resolution of derogatory information is a critical part of the adjudication process for several reasons. Information which appears derogatory can be refuted or mitigated in some instances by the subject of the background investigation. Similarly, the subject may be able to present circumstances which clarify the derogatory information.

Executive Order (E.O.) 10450, entitled "Security Requirements For Government Employment," establishes as the

criteria for government employment that individuals must be "reliable, trustworthy, of good conduct and character and of complete and unswerving loyalty to the United States." Derogatory information is any information that, in the opinion of a reasonably objective person, tends to indicate that an employee may not be possessed of one or more of these qualities.

D. DEROGATORY INFORMATION: Listed below are general areas of concern for adjudicators:

- (1) Loyalty. Any information which indicates the employee is not loyal should be identified as derogatory. Several examples which should bring into question an individual's loyalty are:

- S advocating force or violence to overthrow the government of the United States;
- establishing contact with a seditionist, anarchist or with any representative of a foreign government whose interests may be contrary to the interests of the United States;
- S membership in organizations which systematically commit criminal acts against the United States Government.

- (2) Close Relatives and Associates. In reviewing a background investigation, attention should be given to evidence the subject of the investigation has close relatives or associates residing outside of the United States or who are citizens of a foreign country, especially hostile countries. Any information which tends to show the employee may be subjected to coercion or pressure should be identified as derogatory information and resolved, including frequent and/or prolonged foreign travel.

In resolving information regarding close relatives or associates, it is important to understand the nature of the relationship and the frequency of contact between the employee and the relatives or associates. Therefore, the following information should be obtained from all employees where evidence of foreign relatives or associates is identified in the background investigation case papers or the actual background investigation:

- name and address of the foreign citizen (i.e., aunt, uncle, cousin, close friend, etc.);
 - relationship between employee and foreign citizen (i.e., aunt, uncle, cousin, close friend, etc.);
 - the frequency of contact- past, present and future--with the foreign citizen,
 - the form of such contact (personal visits, letters, cards or telephone calls).
- (a) Relatives or associates in prison. Although employment cannot be denied based on what others have done, one must be aware of possible conflicts. Each situation is handled on a case by case basis. Therefore, the following information should be obtained from all employees where evidence of relatives or associates in prison is identified in the background investigation case papers or the actual background investigation:
- Name and address of prisoner
 - Relationship
 - Frequency of contact
 - Form of contact

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- (3) Undesirable Character Traits: Any trait(s) which may show the employee to be unreliable, untrustworthy or open to compromise is significant in the adjudication of the case. This information may be given by an open or confidential source, be derived from an arrest record or be indicated by the falsification of employment applications or personal history statements. All such information must be viewed in relation to the rest of the file.

Isolated incidents in a person's background are viewed less significantly than a continuing or emerging pattern of behavior.

The adjudicator should try to obtain a complete picture for employment purposes. Undesirable character traits could also place an individual in a compromising situation where coercion or pressure might be used to blackmail an employee. The following examples are provided:

- (a) Sexual Conduct: Sexual conduct and behavior

become important to the adjudication of a background investigation when there is evidence the employee could be coerced or blackmailed due to sexual conduct. Should it be determined an employee could be subjected to coercion because of sexual conduct, this information must be addressed and resolved. If sexual conduct becomes germane, homosexual and heterosexual conduct will be treated the same. Resolution is obtained through procedures used to determine if a person is susceptible to coercion (c(1) and c(2)).

- (b) Alcoholism: Any information which tends to show the employee uses alcohol to excess, or any information that shows alcohol use affecting job performance should be identified as derogatory information. Look for pattern of behavior vs. an isolated incident.
- (4) Mental Disorders-Treatment: Medical treatment for a mental condition, as distinguished from marriage counseling and social services counseling for family problems, must be clarified to determine whether the employee's job performance may be adversely affected. The purpose of identifying this kind of information is to remove any reasonable doubt regarding the current seriousness of a problem. Temporary depression related to the death of a loved one or the failure of a marriage is to be expected, whereas long term depression would cause considerably greater concern.

Medical treatment for a mental/emotional disorder must be accompanied by a recommendation from a competent medical authority the employee is capable to perform the duties of a sensitive position.

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- (5) Financial Responsibility. Indebtedness becomes a legitimate concern when an employee begins to fall behind on credit card payments, alimony, child support, rent, car loans, etc. Nonpayment of a just debt after 90 days is considered delinquent and requires resolution. It is important to determine if the employee considers the debt just.

Some debts are clearly not the responsibility of an

employee and may be the result of careless record keeping by credit reporting agencies.

Refusal to admit to a just debt is not enough to resolve an unfavorable credit record. A derogatory credit report must be resolved by the employee and appropriate documentation provided. Any disputes between the employee and the credit agency must be resolved by the employee and documentation submitted.

Similarly, the repossession of an automobile for non-payment, and eviction from rental housing for non-payment, should be explained by the employee and documentation provided to show that any remaining indebtedness following the eviction or repossession has been resolved.

(a) Debts to be Resolved:

- When employee past due debts total \$400 or more; and,
- Debts are 90 days or more past due.

- (6) Dishonesty: Individuals entering service under this contract must be "...trustworthy... and of good conduct and character..." This requires that employees are honest when filling out all employment documents.

Discrepancies on these forms may be an indication the employee has falsified one of the forms to either conceal past behavior, or to exaggerate or misrepresent qualifications or suitability. In either case, all discrepancies must be resolved.

- (7) Arrests: An arrest, regardless of the offense or when it was committed, is derogatory information. The nature and severity of the offense and when it was committed will have a bearing on the adjudication. Generally, the more recent the offense the greater impact it will have on the adjudication. An arrest that resulted in a conviction and fine/imprisonment must be accompanied by sufficient evidence the employee has been rehabilitated.

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- (8) Drug Usage: Evidence of illegal use of prescription or nonprescription drugs by an employee requires resolution. In resolving drug related derogatory information, the offense must be viewed against the age of the employee and when the offense occurred. In addition, information should be obtained and consideration given regarding what drug(s) were used, how often, and any treatment the employee received for drug usage.
- (9) Confidential Source Information: Background investigations will sometimes contain information provided by sources who request confidentiality under the Privacy Act. It is not permissible, in most cases, to include this information in the resolution of derogatory information because of the risk of identifying the source. Only information that is otherwise substantiated elsewhere in the investigation or pre-employment documents and from an unprotected source can be used.
- (10) Classified Information: Similarly, National Security Information classified at the "Confidential," "Secret," and "Top Secret" levels sometimes appears in background investigations. When such information is identified, it shall be handled appropriately by the contractor.

- E. PROCEDURES TO RESOLVE DEROGATORY INFORMATION: Once derogatory information has been identified, either during the pre-employment process or in the review of the background investigation, it must be resolved. Resolution usually is presented in the form of written documentation obtained through an interview with the employee or written questions given to the employee.

Derogatory information revealed in the pre-employment screening process that falls within the Guidelines of Acceptability or for which a waiver was obtained does not have to be formally readdressed in adjudicating the investigation. The adjudicator should make note that the information was, considered during the pre-employment screening and is within the Guidelines or a waiver was obtained. Copies of waivers should be submitted with the investigation.